DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 401 672 EC 305 162

AUTHOR	Brown, Dean M.
TITLE	Assisting Eighth-Grade At-Risk Students in Successfully Reading Their Textbooks through Support Strategies.
PUB DATE	95
NOTE	76p.; Ed.D. Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University.
PUB TYPE	Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Grade 8; *High Risk Students; Inservice Teacher Education; Intervention; Junior High Schools; Media Adaptation; Program Effectiveness; *Reading Comprehension; *Reading Improvement; *Reading Instruction; *Reading Strategies; Remedial Instruction; Remedial Reading; Staff Development; Study Skills; *Textbooks; Vocabulary Development
IDENTIFIERS	Academic Accommodations (Disabilities)

ABSTRACT

This report discusses a practicum designed to offer support strategies to 55 at-risk students in the eighth grade, 53 of whom indicated they were unable to read their present textbooks even with teachers' help and guidance. The major goals of the intervention were to assist the at-risk students in achieving a score of 70 percent in all content areas on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, in successfully reading their textbooks, and in recognizing vocabulary concepts. Students were taught study-type reading skills to organize textbook content in a way that would facilitate students' attempts to review and retain the information. Eighth-grade teachers were trained to adapt the textbooks in their area of content. Several strategies were used to improve the reading comprehension of the at-risk students, such as Read-Encode- Annotate-Ponder and the Self-Monitoring Approach to Reading and Thinking. Results of the practicum indicated 50 of the 55 students achieved an acceptable score of 70 percent in all content areas and were able to read the existing textbooks. (Contains 44 references.) (CR)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED 401 672

Assisting Eighth-Grade At-Risk Students in Successfully Reading Their Textbooks through Support Strategies.

by

Dean M. Brown

Cluster 59

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND
DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL
HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
D Brown

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

EC 305162

A Practicum II Report Presented to the
Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Nova Southeastern University

1995

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

Verifier : Perry West
Perry West, Ed.D.

Principal of Long County High School
Title

Ludowici, Georgia
Address

December 18, 1995
Date

This practicum report was submitted by Dean M. Brown under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

Jan. 21, 1996
Date of Final Approval of Report

Wm W. Anderson
William W. Anderson, Ed.D., Adviser

Acknowledgment

The writer would like to express thanks to the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students and their teachers who were willing participants in this practicum. An additional thanks is directed to Dr. William Anderson, advisor of Nova Southeastern University, whose guidance and patience are to be commended. Finally, the writer would like to convey her deepest appreciation to her family for their patience and understanding.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT		iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS		iv
LIST OF TABLES		v
LIST OF FIGURES		v
ABSTRACT		vi
Chapter		
I	INTRODUCTION	1
	Description of Community	1
	Writer's Work Setting and Role	4
II	STUDY OF THE PROBLEM	8
	Problem Description	8
	Problem Documentation	10
	Causative Analysis	12
	Relationship of the Problem to the Literature	15
III	ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS	21
	Goals and Expectations	21
	Expected Outcomes	21
	Measurement of Outcomes	22
IV	SOLUTION STRATEGY	26
	Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions	26
	Description of Selected Solution	31
	Report of Action Taken	46
V	RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	56
	Results	57
	Discussion	59
	Reccommendations	62
	Dissemination	63
REFERENCES		64

Appendices Page

A PARENTAL PERMISSION FOR MENTOR STUDENTS. 68

LIST OF TABLES

Table

1 The Problem Sources of the 55 Eighth-Grade At-Risk Students. 20

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure

1 Interview Results With At-Risk Students. 25

ABSTRACT

Assisting Eighth-Grade At-Risk Students in Successfully Reading their Textbooks through Support Strategies. Brown, Dean M., 1995 : Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. Support Strategies / Instructional Strategies / Reading Strategies / At-Risk Students / Peer Assistance / Community Assistance / Reading Difficulties / Education Apathy / Rural Poverty.

This practicum was designed to offer support strategies to 55 students in the eighth-grade that were labeled as at-risk. The major goal was to assist the at-risk students in achieving a score of 70% in all content areas. The eighth-grade teachers were not adequately skilled in strategies designed to assist the at-risk students achieve success. Eighteen of the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students were failing one or more content areas prior to the implementation of the support strategies. The eighteen at-risk students and their teachers were discouraged and felt that failure was inevitable.

The writer researched the literature and developed a weekly schedule that emphasized various support strategies designed to assist the students in their reading and comprehension of the textbooks. Peers were used as tutors for the at-risk students. The administration, faculty, counselor, and community resources assisted the 55 at-risk students in various ways to encourage their academic progress.

The faculty of the eighth-grade teachers adopted the support strategies in their various content areas. Other teachers were introduced to the support strategies and have also adopted them. Of the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students, 50 of them achieved an acceptable score of 70% in all content areas.

****

Permission Statement

As a student in the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies, I do (X) do not ( ) give permission to Nova Southeastern University to distribute copies of this practicum report on request from interested individuals. It is my understanding that Nova Southeastern University will not charge for this dissemination except to cover the costs of microfiching, handling and mailing of the materials.

December 15, 1995 — Dean M Brown

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of the Community

The Southeastern United States boasts of sweltering summers, cool winters and traditions that are equally sacred to past and present generations. Visions of this area evoke scenes of a slower pace of life and smaller towns built around agriculturally oriented economies. Emphasis is stressed on the nurturing of the traditions valued by southerners. It is an inherited duty to preserve these traditions to ensure a heritage remains in tact.

The writer is the product of a rural family that adheres steadfastly to these values that have been steeped in southern traditions. Childhood memories reflect scenes that are now viewed as atypical of the past rural families that were found in the South. The writer's parents were professionals that did not rely on farming as a source of income. Failing to adhere to the stereotypical picture of their generation, the writer's parents also broke another tradition of the rural area. Education was a top priority in the writer's family though the surrounding community failed to see the relationship of poverty to illiteracy. The agrarian-based society of the area now feels the scorn of its neglectful attitude toward education as many of the youth have joined a mass exodus in search of careers that few are adequately prepared for.

The writer is located in a county of 10,000 residents that reflects the image of smaller communities common to the area. The population of the town remains at 2,800 which makes it one of the smallest in the state. The only town that exists in the boundaries of the county is the county seat. There are no industries in the county which forces the residents to commute to neighboring counties for employment. Promises from companies to establish job sites never materialize. The school system is the largest provider of employment in the county.

The poverty, despair, and tribulations of many residents presented the county with a label that causes further frustration. The small rural county was labeled as the poorest in the state due to a very low socioeconomic rating. The label is viewed with disbelief by the same citizens that fought so righteously to maintain a small town atmosphere by warding off any interested industries in the past. The evidence of statistics does little to convince them of their prior mistakes.

The writer, who was born in the county, has seen many peers leave their homes and relocate in other areas of the state that offer employment, security, and a future for their families. These peers seldom return to the county except for an occasional visit. The dreams of the present generation do not revolve around a life based on an agrarian society. Instead they have visions of severing all ties with the county, its local politics, and the inconveniences of a rural area. Crime is now a factor few of the residents of the county have had to contend with in the past. People moving into the area are viewed with suspicion until they are accepted after a trial of an undetermined time passes.

The residents are quick to wave or nod to anyone they confront and

convey a sense of friendliness. Rituals of courtesy and respect are evident from the adults and younger citizens. Births are met with much anticipation by families and friends. The same families and friends are comforting to one another in times of illness and death. Neighbors keep watch over other neighbors' homes, children, and if allowed, private business. Church attendance is a must if a reputation of any level is to be maintained. The churches serve as social and religious gathering arenas to worship and exchange information. The small area allows a feeling of belonging to those who live there. Tragedies are shared and triumphs are acknowledged with a pat on the back or a smile of approval.

The rural area maintains an unemployment rate of 21%. The unemployed are usually former students with no diploma or job skills drawing monthly public assistance funds. There is no discrimination based on race or gender in the unemployment market. Various generations dwell under one roof, not as a voluntary extended family, but as a small blood-related army using any war-time survival techniques to prevail over the elements of poverty. The single teen-age mothers in the county, whose numbers are up over 50% in the past 10 years, feel destined to follow in their mother's and grandmother's footsteps by producing entire families of illegitimate children. The high dropout rate adds to the problem of illiteracy and in turn contributes to the annual median household figure of $6,600. The local high school offers a basic literacy course at night that attracts a portion of the lower income community members striving to break the mold of poverty by increasing their educations. Many of the participants in the program admitted to dropping out of high school due to an inability to perform in the classroom. At the dropout's time of withdrawal, statements were made that conveyed a sense of total

boredom with education as the justification for leaving high school.

The cycle of poverty that is made of illiteracy, illegitimacy, and apathy yield the components of the low socioeconomic area ; unemployment, low incomes, and unwanted births. These components add fuel to the ever-burning flame that demands another cycle begin with the sacrifice of one more generation. Education is the only means available to extinguish the flame. The writer strives to improve the education system that exists in the area and erase the stigma of disadvantage.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The writer's school system has a total enrollment of 1,560 students, most of whom are from local families and the remaining are connected with the military. Kindergarten through grade five are housed in the elementary school and grades six through twelve are housed in the high school. The two separate campuses are connected by a short street. The elementary school has an enrollment of 880 students and the high school's enrollment is 680. The writer teaches eighth-grade reading at the high school campus. There are 35 teachers at the high school level that instruct in the various areas of content.

Many extra-curricular activities take place after school to give a much needed boost to the participating students' sense of belonging and school spirit. The superintendent and principals of both schools strive to create an education program that meets the needs of all the students.

The accommodations of the high school are very old and in much need of repair. Being labeled as the poorest county in the state has had an advantage when seeking funds to refurbish a portion of the existing schools, demolish another section, and construct a new middle school, gym, media center, and other classrooms. The state agreed to match funds on the local

level for the project. A bond referendum to finance the project passed by a narrow margin.

Technology is surfacing slowly, yet it promises to enhance the lives of many students. The free and reduced lunch programs are used by 522 of the students in grades six through twelve. Several federally funded work training programs provide only a small portion of the students with an income. Small local businesses offer a total of seven part-time jobs to the large number of students vying for the employment positions. The few students that are selected for the small number of jobs are quick to admit their pride and relief in being able to contribute to their household incomes.

The writer has been in the field of education for seven years. Four classes of eighth-grade reading and one of eighth-grade history are taught by the writer to adolescents that share characteristics common to all middle school students. The writer finds this unique area of the education system to be challenging on a daily basis. Being a teacher has more responsibilities than simply educating students. The numerous modifications to the title are not explained in the college classrooms that prepare unsuspecting individuals to attempt the task of educating America's youth regardless of intellect, socioeconomic rating, or maturity level. The average classroom teacher will play many roles in the course of a career in education. The roles will include nurse, counselor, surrogate parent, psychologist, banker, and peace mediator. Many of the roles are thrust upon the teachers immediately, while others evolve slowly over a period of time.

The writer tries to introduce a variety of concepts that involve the students in positive situations. Various workshops have been arranged that make use of the personnel resources in the community. Retired and employed

community members participate in offering the students an insight into an acknowledged skill or craft. Classes have been held outdoors and walking tours near the school have been structured to escape boredom. The writer arranges field trips to expose the isolated students to cultural events that include plays, concerts, and museum exploration.

After observing the academic struggle many students have, the idea of forming a class for students that are found to be academically at-risk was conceived by the writer. After consultations with peer teachers and the administration, an eighth-grade at-risk program was developed by the writer to aid the students that are found to be academically disadvantaged, or at-risk of not completing high school. The students in the at-risk group are eighth-graders whose ages range from 13 to 16 years old. Most of the students are from a dysfunctional home environment and function in the low socioeconomic conditions common to the area. The selection of the students for the at-risk class was based on prior retention, previous academic records, and referrals to the Student Support Team.

The Student Support Team is a state mandated referral process in which teachers submit students' names in order to receive advice on how to aid them academically. The teachers are presented with a list of modifications and are expected to try them. Even though this process has been ensued many students still struggle academically. The previous academic records of these at-risk students indicate a serious deficit in the area of reading. All courses that require reading skills reflect a failing or very low score. Many of these at-risk students are not eligible to participate in extra curricular activities as a result of their academic struggle with reading. These at-risk students have one common element : they are not able to successfully read and

comprehend the curriculum presented to them.

The formation of an eighth-grade at-risk program and being engrossed in the available reading remediation strategies has led the writer into an area of leadership previous transformation and acquisition of new responsibilities encourages more diligent study and discourages satisfaction with mediocrity. The writer believes everyone can learn and that everyone is born with an urge to learn and be nurtured. The roles and responsibilities of the writer are to provide an environment where the urge to learn can materialize and academic success can occur. Aided by the identification of academically at-risk students and various reading remediation methods, the writer pursues a rewarding educational experience for the at-risk students who deserve no less.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

Students begin their careers in education with an enormous amount of enthusiasm. Smiles are abundant as the new students pursue knowledge that is designed to prepare them for a role as a contributing member of society. The teachers observe the academic ability each student possesses while introducing them to the expectations of the class. These expectations become unexpected burdens to many of the students.

The contrast between the cultures of home and school deeply affects the psychological and social development of many students - particularly poor, minority children - and these difficulties may cause poor academic performance (Hall & Henderson, 1990). Students entering school that are not in possession of the skills and attitudes expected of them will find the formal learning process to be very difficult. The textbooks that were designed to aid the students in achieving success attribute to the dilemma of an ongoing academic struggle for many students.

Each area of content selected new textbooks every five years in the writer's school. Salesmen were eager to provide their newest selection of textbooks complete with all the information needed to persuade teachers in

their choice of the appropriate textbook that would facilitate learning for all students. The material that accompanied the textbooks provided the teachers with a variety of practice exercises, remediation techniques, and enrichment procedures designed to enhance the objective mastery that was the goal of each lesson plan.

When the textbook selections were made, the academic needs of the majority of students was considered. The assumption that most of the eighth-grade students are able to read on the eighth-grade level was true. The reality of the situation indicated that there were students in the eighth-grade that were not able to read on the eighth-grade level. The eighth-grade teachers were faced with the task of selecting textbooks that provided academic stimulation to the majority or assuring success for the minority of eighth-graders who were limited in their reading abilities. Students labeled as at-risk fell into the category of limited readers.

The at-risk label is totally relative and there are many students who require extra help (Brown, 1994). Students labeled as at-risk are in danger of not completing high school due to a lack of academic performance. The eighth-grade students found to be at-risk displayed the symptoms common to those who drop out of school rather than continue to struggle within the academic arena. The at-risk students found the readability level of their textbooks too difficult which resulted in failure and in turn affected their attitudes with apathy. Most textbooks in the eighth-grade were written on the at-risk students' frustration level, the lowest level at which they could not succeed, even with a teacher's help. In short, the problem was the eighth-grade at-risk students were not able to successfully read their textbooks even with teachers' help and guidance.

Problem Documentation

The desire to know in quantifiable terms exactly what the students have learned is an American trait, but there seems to be little correlation between testing and producing successful students (Grady, 1991). The use of tests as an accountability measure assumes that the learning process can be reduced to clear-cut goals and definable outcomes. Labeling, tracking, and decisions about retention often are based on standardized test scores. Teachers may use a variety of methods to master objectives for the multilevels of academic abilities contained in a classroom, but the test scores still serve as the final analysis of success.

The documentation of the problem that proved the eighth-grade at-risk students were not able to successfully read their present textbooks even with teachers' help and guidance were found in several sources. Test scores, a high academic failure rate, student and teacher interviews by the writer supported the existence of the problem.

The Iowa Test of Basic Skills revealed the reading ranks of 48% of the eighth-grade students ranged from the 1st to the 49th percentiles. The average of the scores achieved by the eighth-grade at-risk students reflected their placement in the 24th percentile. Standardized tests were especially valuable in helping to compare the students' reading achievement with that of students in a national norming group.

The 55 eighth-grade at-risk students in the writers' school were grouped together to allow their teachers to slow the academic instructional pace. With a slower pace of instruction, 37 of the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students were achieving an acceptable grade of 70 all areas of content. The remaining 18 were experiencing academic failure in one or more areas of content.

Oral interviews by the writer with the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students reflected frustration with not being able to successfully read their present textbooks even with teachers' help and guidance by 53 of the students. An additional informal survey was administered to verify that the students were indeed frustrated with the vocabulary levels of their textbooks. The 55 eighth-grade at-risk students were asked to rate a list of key vocabulary concepts in their textbooks as unknown, familiar, or known. The result of the survey showed that 53 of the students surveyed rated 90% of the vocabulary concepts as unknown.

The writer conducted oral interviews with the four eighth-grade teachers concerning the capability of the eighth-grade at-risk students to succeed academically. The teachers revealed that they were under an enormous amount of stress in attempting to ensure success for the eighth-grade at-risk students. The unmodified teacher-made evaluations used as assessment instruments by the eighth-grade teachers reflected a minimum score of 70 was being achieved by 37 of the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students. The eighth-grade teachers were concerned about the remaining 18 at-risk students failure and the apathy toward education that was displayed by the at-risk students. While poverty and other environmental conditions translates into more children at-risk, children of every conceivable background make daily choices that could alter their course in life (Thomas, 1991).

Influences are constantly being made on the students each day. The biggest influence of all, concerning choices, is the home and surrounding community. These influences are changing dramatically in ways that leave some of the writer's at-risk students with less support than ever. Divorce, more common than in past generations, leaves many students with stresses and

fewer resources to help them cope. One in every two marriages ends in divorce and more than half of students spend at least part of their childhood in a one-parent home (O'Neil, 1991). One out of three students experience risk factors that increase their odds against successful development (Werner & Smith, 1992). The writer's at-risk students were no exception. Thirty-seven of the 55 at-risk students were from a broken home and lived with one parent. Five of the 55 at-risk students lived with another relative, usually a grandparent or in a foster home. Many of the writer's at-risk students had parents that did not complete high school nor did they see the importance of doing so. Apathy displayed by the at-risk students toward education was an attitude inherited from their parents. The parents of the writer's 55 at-risk students showed little interest in their child's academic development. Unreturned letters, unreturned phone calls, and admonishments to the eighth-grade teachers to terminate any further contact had been documented numerous times. Most advice on parental concern assumes the parents care about their child's education and want to be involved in it. At one point in education overbearing parents were asked to refrain from unreasonable intercession. The scenario facing the writer and the other eighth-grade teachers was urging any parental involvement. Restricted involvement of the at-risk students' parents in their child's education meant apathy would remain in the home's atmosphere. Apathy present in the atmosphere of the home would continue to invade the educational environment of the school and pollute the conditions that were necessary to ensure success of the at-risk students.

Causative Analysis

The problem of the eighth-grade at-risk students and their teachers existed due to several causes.

The academically at-risk eighth-grade students were unable to read on their grade level. Approximately one-third of students will read within one to two years of their current grade level. About one-third will read more poorly than this and one-third will read better. A variety of inhibitory factors are common characteristics of students who read at levels lower than expected. Such factors might be broadly classified as educational, psychological, sociological, and physiological (Burmeister, 1988).

The academic success of all students is not considered when textbooks are purchased. Ideally, textbooks read by the students under the guidance of a teacher should be selected at each student's instructional level. The ideal situation does not exist when a minority of the students are not reading on grade level. The textbook publishers are dictated to by the majority of the students and their academic needs. A variety of textbooks with different readability levels are available to any school with the funds to purchase them. The writer's school was limited financially and purchased textbooks for the students that were reading on or near their grade levels. Because of their low revenues, rural communities spend about 10% less per student than do metro communities, even though rural school systems reserve a considerably larger portion of their limited budgets for education (Sherman, 1990).

The low socioeconomic conditions of the area deterred student motivation. The stunted motivation began at home where most of the eighth-grade at-risk students lived at or below the poverty level. Having been labeled the poorest county in the state reinforced the problem with a lack of available employment offered to the families of the at-risk students. Public assistance and a high number of births to unmarried females had become an accepted way of life. Education was not a priority with the at-risk students, but survival was.

The cycles of poverty, unemployment, and apathy could only be broken by education. Education was a vision few of the at-risk students were able to see. Welfare, prison, drugs, and a menial existence awaited those who were blinded by the refusal to seek an education as the path out of an unfavorable situation. Student motivation for learning is a major concern of most teachers, but especially for teachers of low-achieving or at-risk students whose numbers are on the rise (Hodgkinson, 1989). The at-risk students appeared to be trapped in a vicious cycle. The low socioeconomic conditions of the area discouraged the influx of business. Minimum wage employment was limited and jobs that paid well did not exist in the area. The single mother raising her family on public assistance was more the normal way of life than the exception. Extended families lived together to ensure the various generations contained in one dwelling were able to draw from the pooled resources. Attending school was the only assurance many at-risk students had of receiving two meals in one day. The attitude of the adults in the home who failed to view an education as a possible escape from poverty influenced the at-risk students who were also blinded by the lifestyles that held them and future generations as hostages.

Another cause of the at-risk students' not being able to succeed in school was the eighth-grade teachers were not successful in adapting the textbooks to ensure success for all students. All teachers want students to learn. To promote this goal, printed materials are used in the classroom in the form of textbooks, pamphlets, magazine and newspaper articles. The problem is many teachers have not been skilled in both choosing and utilizing the printed materials to promote optimal student learning and enjoyment. These eighth-grade teachers, who were most interested in having their at-risk students master content in the area they taught, had not been informed that there was in

reality no dichotomy between teaching reading and teaching content. The eighth-grade teachers had conveyed to the writer that college preparation in the field of education did little to develop the skills needed to ensure success for all students. The eighth-grade teachers reported that the textbook used in their area of content was a daily struggle for the 55 at-risk students. The textbooks were written for students reading on the eighth-grade level. These textbooks were not written with the academic success of all students as a consideration. Textbooks are geared for the greatest number of students, they do not meet the needs and interests of any single group of students. Without textbook aids at-risk readers will learn little (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1993). Since the eighth-grade teachers were located in the poorest county in the state, there were no funds for textbook aids. Without funds for textbook aids, the textbooks became a burden to the 55 at-risk eighth-grade students and their teachers. Success continued to evade many of these students and their teachers in the joint quest for successful achievement.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

The at-risk problem is an international one. It exists in all nations where test scores are used as the basis for judging academic success. In the United States students labeled academically at-risk can be found in large urban and small rural areas. No sex, age, race, or income level is exempt from the complex social, emotional, or academic needs of the at-risk students. The term, at-risk, appears with increasing frequency in educational literature. The meaning of at-risk fluctuates with the individual's needs and the topics of conversation at the national, state, district, and local school levels. In educational research, the term at-risk student is relatively new and has only recently warranted a separate ERIC listing despite the number of publications

that employed the descriptor (Richardson, Casanova, Placier, & Guilfoyle, 1989). A review of the literature available on academically at-risk students proves that the label has no age boundaries. The term refers to those about to enter kindergarten and individuals graduating from high school. The term at-risk has emerged in the wide assortment of social service agencies that are organized to serve students that are found to be at-risk of not completing school. Collaborative efforts between schools and other community sectors occur to safeguard the students' education and welfare (Gutherie & Gutherie, 1991).In the classroom it is the teacher's knowledge about the at-risk students' characteristics that will help to identify the skills they bring to the learning situation and aid in understanding their cultural backgrounds.

The 55 eighth-grade at-risk students' problem was similar to that of many at-risk students who were not successfully reading their textbooks even with the aid of a teacher. The predicament of these disadvantaged students is not a new issue. Over the past few decades, educators have searched for effective ways of educating the at-risk students found in virtually every school in the United States (Knapp, Turnbull, & Shields, 1990). Waynant discusses and reports (1993) that there are numerous reasons for the at-risk students' experiencing reading difficulties. A myth exists that once a student is taught the basic skills of reading during the first three grades, the ability to read anything should become an integral part of life. This simply is not true for an at-risk student due to the risks related to their environments.

> The at-risk student is trying to engage in functional learning, but functional learning implies that a motivated man, woman, or older peer is there to respond-patiently and helpfully. If there is consistently no one there to respond, the student does not learn in the natural way at all. The student learns in an unnatural way. (May, 1994, pp. 56-57).

When educators talk about students at-risk, they have often meant economically poor children who have had below-average opportunities to learn what is need for success in school. The line between students at-risk and those labeled as learning disabled is extremely thin (Ravitz,1992).

An endless array of causes for the students labeled academically at-risk is found in the literature. Poverty, broken homes, low motivation, apathy towards education, and grade retention are a sampling of the causes sited. Some students lag in academics because of a problem that developed in adolescence: pregnancy, criminal conviction, suicide attempts, and substance abuse. After reading the literature available, the writer felt that all students would be at-risk academically or emotionally at some point in their educational careers.

The rural at-risk students face special difficulties. It is revealed in the literature that rural children are poorer and attend poorer schools. These schools have no funding available for nontraditional alternative programs or supplemental remedial material. The lower quality of school means these rural families have lower educational expectations. These expectations eventually become apathy that is directed towards the educational system that has failed to remove past generations from the cycle of poverty and ignorance. It is found in many studies of rural economics that poor educational and skill levels are a prime barrier to economic expansion, particularly in the South (Sherman, 1990). There was no way to group the writer's rural at-risk students into any one area of cause for the academic deficiency in reading. Each student's past education, environment, and encouragement had to be considered before conclusions about the problem could be made. There was no single cause for the reading problems facing the at-risk students.

Few educators dispute the importance of assessment. Even if they do, the public counters that assessment is indeed crucial. The reason for this belief is that the public has been trained to examine the quality of education at the local, state, and national levels by the results of test scores. The academically at-risk students rank low on achievement tests which reflects a struggle for them to succeed on levels considered to be acceptable (Brown, 1994).

The evidence that the writer's 55 at-risk students had academic problems was evident by their inclusion in the national statistics. The fact is at least one-third of the nations' children are at-risk before they enter school (Hodgkinson, 1991). There is an array of statistics in the literature that points to figures reflecting the bleak outlook of students labeled as academically at-risk. These at-risk students are less likely to complete high school or have future incomes that exceed the poverty level. The writer's at-risk students were as conventional in their evidence as other at-risk students. They produced low standardized test scores, a high failure rate, and limited motivation to increase the statistics of either.

The literature establishes that there are many skills and strategies needed by an at-risk student to maintain the ability to read and to grow as a reader. Teachers make decisions everyday about instructional language, techniques for presenting information, motivation, and subject content (Rosenshine, 1990). These decisions are often made with limited regard to the at-risk student. Teachers must be aware of the needs of all students regardless of their ability to perform. Teachers can provide a presentation of the skills needed to succeed in the educational arena to the at-risk students. The students then, regardless of socioeconomic, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds

need to participate in involvement in their own education (Beachman, 1990). At-risk students should be given these skills and strategies to maintain the ability to read successfully by their teachers (Tierney, Readence, & Dishner, 1990). Many teachers do not recognize that their jobs are to assist all students in moving from year to year through the various grades. This effort should prepare students to become productive citizens while obtaining knowledge and skills needed in life through literacy. To some extent teachers control whether students are literate through the assignments they make in the content areas.

Content literacy is the ability to use reading and writing skills to acquire new content within a given subject area. It requires general skills related to reading and writing in the specific area of study and existing content knowledge within that area (McKenna & Robinson, 1993). By teaching content, teachers are automatically adding to their students' knowledge base while increasing their content literacy at the same time. Content literate students are able to acquire new knowledge through reading and, refine and reorganize that new knowledge through writing. These processes pertain to all areas of content. Because learning content is the only relevant goal of literacy activities, McKenna (1993) reveals that teachers do not have to be concerned with the fine points of teaching writing. Teachers should be more concerned with their students comprehending new material and presenting tasks that are not beyond the students' abilities. The method for using and developing content literacy have an extensive research base. In spite of this research, many reachers resist using them due to an argument that they lack the training to contend with the at-risk students' limited abilities.

The debate between curriculum and methods has been an issue in

education for many years. Allington (1994) finds that across this debate of curriculum one pattern emerges : Some children, usually poor children, are not nearly as successful in their attempts to develop literacy as other, more advantaged, children.

The literature revealed that there were many problems, evidence, and causes similar to the writer's situation. The advice in the literature pointed to the fact that the problems the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students were experiencing was not unique to any situation. The eighth-grade at-risk students were not successfully reading their textbooks even with teachers' help and guidance. The problems could not be blamed on any one source. The problems were equal in scope and had to be absorbed by all who were concerned with finding a solution.

The following table shows that no single source of the at-risk students' problem existed. All of the problems shared in the dilemma facing the at-risk students.

Table 1.

The Problem Sources of the 55 Eighth-Grade At-Risk Students.

Problem	With Problem	Without Problem
Low I.T.B.S. scores	55	0
Failure in content areas	18	37
Text frustration	53	2
Broken homes	42	13
Low socioeconomic area	55	0
Text adaptation skills(teachers)	55	0
Limited reading abilities	55	0

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The following goals and outcomes were projected for this practicum.

The writer's goals demonstrated an intense desire to concentrate on aiding teachers educate the at-risk students who were not able to successfully read their existing textbooks. Without the aid of their teachers, the at-risk students would most likely not obtain success. The first goal was to increase the academic success of the eighth-grade at-risk students. The second goal was that academic success would be experienced by the eighth-grade at-risk students in all content areas.

Expected Outcomes

At the end of the implementation period of the practicum, the writer had several expected outcomes.

The first expected outcome was that the academic levels of the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students would increase from 37 of the at-risk students achieving an acceptable grade of 70 in all content areas to 50 of the at-risk students achieving an acceptable grade of 70 in all content areas.

The second outcome was that of 55 eighth-grade at-risk students, 50

would achieve a minimum 70 out of 100 points on modified teacher-made evaluations used as tools to evaluate the at-risk students' progress in a content area. The unmodified teacher-made evaluations used in content areas reflected a minimum score of 70 was being achieved by 37 of the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students.

The third outcome revolved around an oral interview of the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students by the writer concerning attitudes toward reading the textbooks. Two of 55 eighth-grade at-risk students indicated, in response to a question about their ability to successfully read the textbooks with teachers' help and guidance, they were able to achieve success. When asked in an oral interview by the writer, at the end of the implementation of the practicum, 50 of 55 eighth-grade at-risk students indicated, in response to their ability to successfully read the textbooks even with the teachers' help and guidance, that they were able to achieve success.

The final outcome involved the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students rating the key vocabulary concepts as unknown, familiar, or known. The existing rate of unknown vocabulary concepts was 90%. An oral survey was administered at the end of the practicum indicating that 20% of the vocabulary concepts were unknown by the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students.

Measurement of Outcomes

The writer used a variety of techniques and instruments to measure the outcomes of the practicum.

The first measurement of outcome was a record reporting the grades in all content areas maintained by the writer. It was anticipated that 50 of 55, an increase from the existing number of 37 of 55, at-risk students would achieve an acceptable grade of 70% in all content areas. Grade contributions to the

record were made on a weekly basis to allow the writer to monitor any problem area for the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students that needed modifying.

The second measurement of outcome involved the use of modified teacher-made evaluations. The results of the modified teacher-made evaluations were used as an assessment instrument to measure the students' progress in an area of content. The assessment instruments evaluated outcomes in terms of goals or objectives determined by the five eighth-grade teachers for the eighth-grade at-risk students. The assessment instruments were teacher-made to ensure each of the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students were evaluated over the material stressed by their teachers. The material emphasized by the teacher was designed to ensure the success of mastering the designated goals or objectives. An assortment of teacher-made evaluations were used to prepare the eighth-grade at-risk students for the variety of assessment instruments they will encounter in the future years of their educations.

A teacher-made evaluation was administered to the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students at least once each week on a designated day during the implementation period of the practicum. The writer, along with the other eighth-grade teachers, monitored the eighth-grade at-risk students' progress and addressed any problem areas that the at-risk students could encounter. Peer collaboration among the five eighth-grade teachers focused on available methods that could be used to aid the eighth-grade at-risk students' progress, and if implemented, evaluated the strategies' success.

The evaluation instruments were, when possible, in essay form to give all possible credit for an acceptable answer. The evaluations were multiple-choice, true or false, and fill in the blanks. The 55 eighth-grade at-risk students

were given 40 minutes of class time to complete an evaluation. An adequate score by the at-risk students was achieved by obtaining 70 out of 100 possible points on each evaluation.

The third technique used to measure the outcome of the practicum was oral interviews conducted by the writer of the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students. In a brief one question interview by the writer about attitudes toward reading the textbooks, two of 55 eighth-grade at-risk students indicated they were able to successfully read the textbooks even with a teacher's help and guidance. The technique used at the end of the implementation of the practicum was again, the use of an oral interview. The writer interviewed the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students asking the following question: How do you feel about reading your textbook now with a teacher helping you? The writer recorded the students' answers by using a video camera to record their responses. The writer also made a written transfer of the at-risk students' remarks in a log.

The final measurement of outcome was an oral survey that measured the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students rating the key vocabulary concepts as known, familiar, or unknown. The results of the survey recorded by the writer in a log reflected 20% of the vocabulary concepts were unknown.

Mechanism for Recording Unexpected Events

Unexpected events that occured during the practicum were recorded in a log kept by the writer. These unexpected occurrences were evaluated and advice was sought from the writer's practicum advisor or peers if a satisfactory solution could not be found independently. The log was also used as a journal by the writer to record the practicum for future reference.

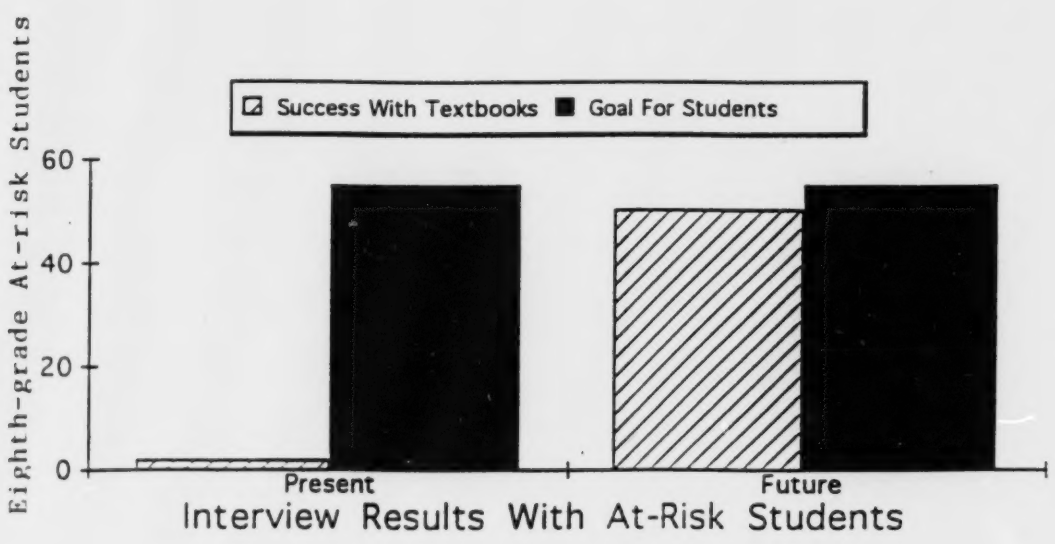


Figure 1. The left bars depict the original two of 55 eighth-grade at-risk students that felt successful reading the content area textbooks even with a teacher's help and guidance. The right bars indicate the result of 50 of 55 eighth-grade at-risk students that felt successful reading the content area textbooks with a teacher's help and guidance following the implementation of the practicum.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

The writer's eighth-grade at-risk students were not able to successfully read the existing textbooks even with teacher' help and guidance. The eighth-grade teachers were not skilled in adapting the textbooks to ensure success. The problems of the at-risk students and their teachers were international. There were many suggested possible solutions available.

Bruckerhoff (1988) felt that implementing a differentiated curriculum with the mastery of basic skills was a solution. Most students who had been labeled were academically disadvantaged. Even though these students were slow learners, they were still educable and employable. This study revealed a concentration should be made on emphasizing the mastering of basic skills to discourage future employment. A follow-up study proved the strategy worked.

Kallman (1991) suggested the use of a multi-faceted program involving faculty, parents, peers, and counselors. He incorporated social concern with academic remediation to produce higher grades and pro-social skills.

Cunningham (1991) implied that the use of a multilevel multimethod approach for students should be used at all ability levels.

Larrivee and Bourque (1991) evaluated the impact of several

intervention strategies on at-risk students. The strategies targeted student achievement, attitude, behavior, attendance, and dropout rates. The interventions were categorized on three levels: individual strategies, school strategies, and community strategies. The results indicated that all programs were successful in preventing at-risk students from dropping out and improving student attitudes. Differential program effects were found for student achievement, in-class behavior, and school attendance.

May (1994) felt that locating and recording information are two study skills that need to be modeled by the teacher, followed by purposeful application with reference books at various levels of difficulty.

Perna (1992) established a drop-out prevention program geared to serving the at-risk students' academic needs. The key to success was the combined efforts of school personnel and various community resources. Small settings with low student-teacher ratios added to the success in academics.

Hadley and Hadley (1991) provided a description of a monitoring program for students that were found to be academically at-risk. Included were low-level activities in the areas of music, art, poetry, and reading comprehension that were designed to enhance learning. The strategies could be incorporated into all curriculum levels with successful results. This program was found to promote achievement in at-risk students and increased their academic performance.

Walter (1991) recommends at-risk students be provided with abundant opportunities to evaluate their own reading growth ; they must also be provided with opportunities to make plans for their own improvement and carry them through.

Allington (1994) feels that educators assign students work to complete and confuse that with teaching. He suggests that all students need models, explanation, and demonstrations of how reading is accomplished. Allington proposes that most students need more assignments with strategy instruction even though most work accomplished by students is not accompanied by any sort of instructional interaction.

Kallman (1991) and Perna (1992) had at the center of their solutions, involvement from human resources in and out of the school that encouraged students. This involvement is worth trying if parental support is desired. There are school systems that boast of an abundance of parental support both academically and economically. The open house activities held three times a year at the writer's school had miserable results. Of the writer's 55 at-risk students, only three of the parents visited the school. Parents need to take some responsibility for their child's academic progress or regression. The resources in the school had possibility. The faculty would become involved in the development and implementation of programs designed to help the students if someone would take the initiative to assume a role of leadership to guide them. The peers of the at-risk students were valuable resources that could relate the value of an education to their classmates who had lost sight of light at the end of the educational tunnel. Counselors would offer the much needed one-on-one advice so desperately needed by the confused at-risk students. In an effort to meet the needs of the individual student, it is forgotten that a student's needs are best met by enhancing the sense of a school community. The school community needs the purposeful association of faculty, parents, peers, and counselors to build social capital, the expectations and obligations people feel toward one another.

Bruckerhoff (1988) made an excellent point in placing the emphasis on stressing the basic skills curriculum. The college preparatory classes have little use to a students who cannot read the title of the textbook. It is a fact that most of the students labeled academically at-risk will not complete high school. They need to be prepared in the most basic of skills for future reference as adults. If these students have a solid base in reading and math, future changes in their plans for an academic career may occur. Many classes the at-risk students have to take offer no quality skills for living. A vocational program combined with an academic program would be ideal if access to a vocational program existed. The writer's school had no vocational program on a middle school level to coordinate with the academic classes. To assume all students will enter college is fallacy many educators have. The writer believed an emphasis on basic skills is vital and Bruckerhoff was practical in forming a solution to aid the at-risk students.

Larrivee and Bourque (1991) offered their evaluations of several strategies. They concluded that the curriculum modifications designed to improve both social and academic areas were successful in dropout prevention and improving the attitudes of the at-risk students. The writer felt a blanket statement was made to endorse the use of all strategies as a solution. Some of the strategies used offered advice to meet the needs of the at-risk population.

Cunningham (1991) suggested the use of a multilevel, multimethod approach was useful for students of all ability levels. This method of literacy instruction is appropriate for use with at-risk students if the methods are presented to the teachers in an understandable format.

May (1994) suggested that locating and recording information are two

study skills the teacher should model. This is true with at-risk students who are unsure many times of the information resources available to them or how to use the resources. The use of various levels of reference books is worthwhile if the students have access to them. The writer's media center was located in the high school and was dictated to by the needs of the majority of students which were in high school and most read on or above their grade levels.

Walter (1991) recommends that at-risk students be allowed to evaluate their own reading growth. The writer has found that the majority of the eighth-grade students that are at-risk or not, will monitor their own progress if given an opportunity to participate in the evaluation. The writer agrees that the second statement Walter makes is also valuable. At-risk students should be given opportunities to make plans for their own improvement and carry them through. All students should be aware that there is always room for improvement in any area of education and they need to be shown how to make their own plans, carry them through, and evaluate their success.

Allington (1994) extends an admonishment that the students who are most in need of the opportunities to actually read are the ones who receive the least opportunities to do so. He suggests that all students need some instruction time to acquire reading skills, but some students require more and better instruction as well as expanded opportunities to read. Allington also points out that teachers must plan instructional strategies and relate them to the content being taught. He reveals that many teachers simply pass out the work and expect the students to complete it with little or no accompaniment of instructional interaction. The writer agreed with Allington and retained many of his suggestions that are useful to all teachers and their students.

Description of Solution Selected

The goal of the writer was to implement a plan that would aid the eighth-grade teachers in formatting and implementing instructional strategies designed to ensure academic success for the eighth-grade at-risk students.

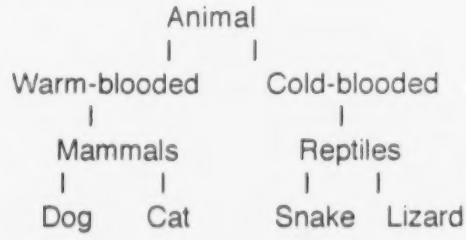
The practicum took place over an eight month period and was divided into three segments that would fully utilize the quantity of time allotted to each. The three segments took place during the remainder of the school year, over the summer months, and the next school year.

The remaining weeks of school were an ideal time to prepare the eighth-grade at-risk students for high school. With a minimum amount of time available, the writer focused on a study-type reading skill designed to improve the academic performance of the students. Study-type reading was used to enlist and organize the content found in textbooks in a way that would enable the at-risk student in later attempts to review and retain it. The eighth-grade teachers attended three sessions during their planning time of 50 minutes. The writer presented the method of study to the eighth-grade teachers and enlisted their assistance in customizing the study-type reading skills for the at-risk students. The study-type method provided students with a systematic approach to study type reading and promote more efficient learning of assigned reading material. The reading difficulties that the at-risk students displayed were considered as each step in the study-type method was planned.

Each lesson began with the eighth-grade teacher introducing the new or unfamiliar vocabulary to the students by listing the words, pronouncing them, and relaying the words' meanings. The word list appeared on the board, overhead, poster, or any method of display available A word map was used

with each new word to make a word picture of ideas. The word map attempted to develop the students' to-be-learned concepts based upon their existing conceptual background. Word concepts were developed by associating the new to the known. Word maps were used for acquiring information from print, enhancing comprehension, and encouraging students to ponder the relationships between ideas and concepts. The Word Map was implemented using the following steps:

1. Develop the target concept. A hierarchy was constructed that refered to a common, more general concept of which the target concept was a member. The following is an example of a hierarchy.



2. Define the concept. The relevant attributes for later discussion were specified.

3. Present the concept. Students were provided the target concept to be learned and asked for examples to be provided.

4. Finish constructing the hierarchy. The students were questioned to have them feel they were a part of the construction.

5. Guide students to relevant attributes. If the students had misconceptions, they were cleared and reminded of the targeted concept.

6. Guide students to irrelevant attributes. This led to a fuller understanding of the concept.

7. Complete teaching the concept. The students were guided in completing the word map. Unstated examples were presented to broaden the students'

knowledge (Schwartz & Raphael, 1985, pp. 198-205).

The teacher left the new or unfamiliar vocabulary words and the developed word maps displayed until the lesson had been completed. This vocabulary introduction was done to familiarize the at-risk students with the words they would encounter in the lesson. All research on the topic of reading stresses that a strong relationship exists between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. The introduction of these vocabulary skills to the at-risk students revealed a method of study they would be able to perform later in their educational careers by following the same procedure with the use of a dictionary. The at-risk students had three lessons modeled by their content area teacher in the same manner as previously described. The at-risk students were then encouraged to select unfamiliar words by scanning the lesson for bold print, italics, and summaries, and following the same procedure modeled by the eighth-grade teachers including the use of a dictionary.

The next step allowed the students to scan the entire lesson for general ideas. The general ideas included headings, subheadings, bold print, and illustrations. The scanning allowed the at-risk students to determine the overall theme of the lesson. The teacher then conducted a session that asked the at-risk students to relay the results of their scanning. The general ideas were listed as a memorandum of the topic. The purpose of the scanning was to require the at-risk students to read and think about the content of the lesson.

At this point, the eighth-grade teachers distributed questions formulated for a specific reading passage to give the at-risk students a purpose for reading. The specified passage did not require over ten minutes of reading time to locate and record the key answer. The abbreviated amount of required reading was done to eliminate the feeling of being burdened with a seemingly enormous

task. The teacher then allowed the students to share answers orally, with time allotted for corrections and any needed remediation. After the eighth-grade teachers had modeled this questioning technique three times, the students were then encouraged to read small portions of the material and develop their own questions and answers over the print. This skill will assist the at-risk students in the future by portioning the material into smaller sections and formulating either mental or written questions and answers designed to increase comprehension of the lesson. Eventually, the at-risk students were required to work through the remainder of the school year using the study-type method. The eighth-grade teachers remediated on a personal basis for any at-risk student requiring additional aid until the student related a feeling of confidence in assuming the challenge.

A designated review day was held that required the use of all information recorded pertaining to the vocabulary words and the questions and answers. The review was held prior to any evaluation. The information recorded by the at-risk students served as a form of note taking. The study-type skills were beneficial in improving the at-risk students metacognitive skills as they became aware of situations in which to use the study skills and then applied them.

The eighth-grade teachers evaluated the at-risk students on their recorded use of the study-type skills and applied a score to show the students the relationship between their approach to a learning task and the result of that approach. The purpose of teaching this study-type skill was to help at-risk students acquire information, organize it, and express it. The application of the study-type skill , therefore, increased the independent functioning of the at-risk students as they entered high school and, hopefully, beyond.

Three summer workshops were arranged by the writer to provide the eighth-grade teachers with the skills needed to adapt their content area textbook to ensure the at-risk students had every opportunity to succeed. During the workshops the focus was directed to study skills instruction that resulted in improved achievement for the at-risk students. By incorporating study skills instruction into the curriculum, at-risk students may attribute their academic success to the systematic selection and application of strategies instead of luck or the assistance of others. At-risk students are able to develop effective repertoires of study skills. Utilization of study skills will aid at-risk students to exhibit more active learning styles and to demonstrate proactive approaches to academic tasks, behavior connected to academic achievement (Olson & Platt,1992).

In order for study skills training to be effective, teachers must be aware of the components that contribute to its success (Paris, 1988). Copies of the basic components of the study skill instruction were provided for the eighth-grade teachers to use for referral purposes. The components were included in the teaching of all study skills and strategies presented.

During the first workshop, the writer explained the objectives to be covered during all sessions. The eighth-grade teachers had conveyed to the writer that they did not feel adequately prepared to adapt the textbook in their area of content to ensure the at-risk students' academic success. The workshops focused on increasing the eighth-grade teachers' textbook adaptation skills by presenting a variety of instructional strategies that build these needed skills. The reading performance of the at-risk students increased as steps were taken by the eighth-grade teachers to utilize any strategy or combination of strategies and lesson frameworks that prepared the at-risk

students to deal with the textbook features in any area of content. The three workshops presented strategies in the areas of instruction that were dependent on the eighth-grade teachers explaining the use and importance of each to the at-risk eighth-grade students. The eighth-grade teachers were encouraged by the writer to implement any single aspect of the instructional strategies or to group them together to provide a customized method of teaching conducive to the teachers' area of content. These skills provided the eighth-grade teachers with methods of instilling study strategies without intruding on the time that was needed for instruction.

The first workshop focused on the eighth-grade at-risk students who did not read on grade level and were achieving minimal success in the content areas. Many at-risk students may not achieve academic success due to poor organizational and information-processing skills. They have not been shown how to dissect a portion of assigned material so that comprehension occurs. Many students receive little or no training and practice in study strategies that will aid them in academic achievement. Most teachers tend to be good students and assume their students do not need direct instruction in study skills (Gall, Gall, Jacobsen, & Bullock, 1990).

The following strategies were organized to extend vital help to prepare the eighth-grade at-risk students for reading assignments, to provide guidance during reading, and to extend comprehension following reading. These instructional strategies were presented to the eighth-grade teachers over a three day period by the writer.

The PORPE (Predict, Organize, Rehearse, Practice,Evaluate) is a study strategy developed by Simpson (1986). The PORPE was designed to aid students in : (1) actively planning, monitoring, and evaluating their mastery of

content; (2) learning the process involved in preparing for improving achievement on essay evaluations; and (3) using writing to facilitate the learning of content material. The PORPE strategy is of value in teaching study strategies to middle school students who need remediation in the area of reading. PORPE consists of five steps :

1. Predict. After the students have read a portion of the text, they are to predict potential essay questions. The teacher should model the process involved in predicting essay questions. The questions should be discussed and evaluated to identify the most plausible ones.

2. Organize. Students should organize the key information that will answer the predicted essay questions. The students should work in small groups to organize the key information. The results of the small groups should be shared with the class and discussed.

3. Rehearsal. Students are to place key ideas, examples, and overall organization into their long-memory for later recall during the essay evaluation. Once the memorization process has been improved, the students should test themselves several times over a period of days to insure that the information stays in long-term memory.

4. Practice. In the practice step, the students practice writing out in detail what they recited in the rehearsal step.

5. Evaluate. Students are to learn to evaluate their practice essay answers as a teacher would. This can only be done by the teacher modeling the procedure for the students. Questions that the teachers may ask while evaluating an essay answer should be provided to offer a guideline (Simpson, 1986).

The K-W-L (What I Know, What I Want To Learn, What I Learned) strategy is used to ensure students learn from their text in any content area. Carr and

Ogle (1987) developed K-W-L plus as a total lesson plan consisting of prereading, guided silent reading, and postreading components. The three-step plan in which the teacher helps the students locate gaps in their existing knowledge consists of : (1) Determine what the students know, (2) Help students determine what they want to learn, and (3) Assess what students have learned (appendix d). The K-W-L method involves brainstorming, developing categories for the organization of ideas, using specific questions, auditing what has been learned, and guiding further reading.

KWL plus involves three basic steps that help students learn from nonfiction text in any content area.

1. What I Know. Brainstorming and generating categories for ideas are the purpose of the first step. As the students offer ideas, the teachers should jot them down on a board for use as the basis for encouraging future discussion.
2. What Do I Want To Learn? The teacher's goal is to turn uncertainties and interests into a reason to read. After discussing various possible questions for the class, the teacher should encourage each student to specify his or her question. After the students have developed questions, they are to read the selections. The selections may be read in their entirety or only a portion.
3. What I Learned. As students complete the assigned reading portion, the students should write down what they have learned and check what questions they still need answered. If the students are not able to locate the answers, they should be assigned to a group to collaborate (Carr & Ogle, 1987).

Read-Encode-Annotate-Ponder, or REAP (Eanet & Manzo, 1976) is designed to : (1) Improve the comprehension abilities of readers by helping them synthesize an author's ideas into their own words and (2) Developing students' writing ability for future use in studying and recalling the ideas

acquired through reading. REAP centers on the idea that students will comprehend best when asked to relay the ideas they have gathered from a designated passage. The REAP technique consists of four stages : (1) Reading to discover the author's ideas, (2) Encoding the author's ideas into the student's own language, (3) Annotating the gleaned ideas in writing for oneself or for sharing with others, (4) Pondering the significance of the annotation. The REAP method requires the students to be actively involved in the content of the textbook, and it encourages students' independence in reading. This strategy gives students insight into reading, language, and thinking development.

The Survey Technique (Aukerman, 1972) is intended to : (1) provide the students with a systematic approach for previewing a content chapter and (2) provide the classroom teacher with an additional approach to use in preparing the students to read the text. The Survey Technique entails a six-step procedure that can be applied for use with any content area textbook. The six steps are :

1. Analysis of Chapter Title. After reading the title ask the students what they think the chapter contents will be. This allows all students to participate .
2. Analysis of Subtitles. The students are asked to read the subtitles in the chapter and develop questions which are written on the board. The questions can be developed as an entire class or the teacher may request the individual students complete a set of questions.
3. Analysis of Visuals. The teacher should stress the importance of visual aid used in a chapter, and assist the students in comprehending them.
4. Introductory Paragraph(s). The introductory paragraph(s) should be read and a discussion should follow concentrating on the information in the paragraph(s)

read. A discussion should begin that revolves around relating the information discovered in the first three steps.

5. Concluding Paragraph(s). The final paragraph(s) usually provide a summary of the chapter content. By reading the summary before reading the total chapter in detail, the students will receive additional confirmation of what they found in all the previous steps of their survey.

6. Deriving the Main Idea. The class should develop a concise statement that can stand alone as the main idea of the chapter.

As with all instructional strategies, the teacher must decide which information is to be emphasized. The Survey Technique is designed to follow a traditional textbook containing the following format: chapter title, introduction, main headings with subtopics, summary, review questions, and exercises.

The Directed Reading Thinking - Activity (DR - TA) (Stauffer, 1969) has three purposes for the classroom student. The DR - TA is a three-step plan designed to assist readers in setting their own purposes for reading. The teacher's role is to help the students form predictions about a selection and later to help them test their predictions. The three steps in the DR - TA are:

1. Assist students in developing purposes for reading. Determine the students' background related to the material to be read. The teacher should provide appropriate teaching, when needed, to address lack of information or misconceptions about the reading. A discussion should take place to introduce the students to any new vocabulary. The teacher should invite the students to predict the reading material to set a purpose for reading.

2. Facilitate reasoning as reading proceeds. The teacher should circulate among the students as they read, offering assistance where needed. Questions should be answered by the teacher. Specific questions about the vocabulary

should be responded to by encouraging the students to make use of context, glossaries, and other aids available to them.

3. Help students test their predictions. After the students have read the assigned portion, the teacher should remind them of their predictions. The students should be encouraged to provide proof based on the reading. When predictions are not borne out, the students should be required to cite information that refutes their original assumptions. The DR - TA works best with narrative materials and it stresses the need to think actively while reading.

The Listening Guide was developed by Castallo (1976). The Listening Guide was designed to aid students: (1) listen for the major points made in an oral presentation, and (2) write their notes in an organized manner for later study. There are two steps to using the Listening Guide:

1. Preparation. Teachers must decide what the most important points in a lecture will be. These points should be set up in an outline form, in the order and relationship they belong.

2. Presentation. Copies of a blank skeletal outline, prepared to coincide with the lecture, should be distributed to the students. Students should be given an overview of the talk and directed to listen and fill in the outline with the information. It is important that the talk be arranged in the order specified by the outline. Teachers should also fill in a copy of the outline on the overhead projector to clarify any potential misunderstanding. Several lectures should occur in this manner followed by the students gaining practice with their own outline. This strategy will prepare the middle school student for the lecture method preferred by many secondary teachers.

The SMART (Self-Monitoring Approach to Reading and Thinking) method is designed to offer an acquirable method for self-monitoring

comprehension. Vaughan and Estes (1986) developed the SMART method to aid students with a deficit in the literacy area. The SMART system is easily learned and does not add to the mental burden of the remedial reader by requiring complex thinking and notations. There are three steps for success in the SMART method whose success depends on the extent to which the teachers regularly engage students in an instructional conversation about their efforts to reach for meaning. The three steps used in SMART are:

1. Students keep track of their comprehension by using only two marginal notations :

X I understand
? I am confused

2. In step two the students then attempt to express the concepts and ideas they have understood to themselves, a peer, or an inquiring teacher.

3. In the final step students are urged to try solutions to apparent lapses in comprehension (reread; more carefully identify the word or idea source of the problem; go for help).

Simpson and Nist (1984) developed the PLAE model as a means of involving students in planning, monitoring, and controlling their own study. The acronym reminds students to follow four basic steps:

1. Preplanning. Find out about the test, and answer a series of questions to set performance goals.

2. Listing. Make a list of the most appropriate study strategies to use, and set time limits and goals for each study session.

3. Activating. Put the study plan into action, making adjustments where necessary.

4. Evaluation. After test scores have been received, the students should

engage in a self-guided form of assessment by diagnosing errors, looking for patterns of strengths and weaknesses, and incorporating these findings into future study plans.

Manzo and Casale (1985) developed the Listen - Read - Discuss (L-R-D) system to provide the background information and to spur questions necessary for students to hand the goals of content reading. This procedure affords input from students, teachers, and text as lecture, textbook reading, and student concerns are fielded, extended, and repeated in the context of discussion. The teachers influence the content that is learned; but students have the opportunity to affect the flow through invitations to express their needs, confusions, and so on. The L-R-D procedure has three basic steps:

1. Presentation. A portion of the content is presented in a favored form (usually lecture) for about fifteen minutes. The goal of this presentation is to build student confidence prior to reading through a clear presentation of the ideas.
2. Reading. The class reads the pages upon which the presentation was based. It is suggested that the students locate words, ideas, or facts that were difficult to comprehend, inconsistent with the prior presentation, or likely to be uncertain.
3. Discussion. This should be directed at first reducing uncertainties, then moving on to raising uncertainties. The teacher should vary the questions - order, precise form, and number - with class needs, teacher inclinations, and the nature of the material.

Carol Dana (1989) designed some cuing systems, the purpose of which is to get disabled readers to use and internalize various strategies. Dana describes four major cuing strategies that fall into the following three stages of reading:

1. Before Reading. Students are asked to relax, activate their purpose, and motivate themselves (RAM).

2. During Reading. To focus on the content, the students are to summarize natural selections, use image to visualize the contents, and predict what is coming (SIPS).

3. Use if Needed. If students are having problems with the selection, they are to read further or read again, imagine or visualize the content, paraphrase the troublesome section, and speed up or slow down or seek help (RIPS).

4. After Reading. To aid the students in retaining their memory, they should explain what the selection meant to them to the teacher or another student, explore other versions, and expand with related material (EEEZ).

In addition to the use of study strategies to aid the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students, portfolios were introduced to the eighth-grade teachers to assist their students in achieving success. The use of portfolios was a new evaluation instrument used in the writer's school. Weekly contributions in each content area were selected jointly by the four eighth-grade teachers and the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students to represent their views of the students' strongest examples of progress toward mastering a learning goal specified by the content area teacher. A minimum grade of 70% was required on all contributions made to the portfolio. Teachers assisted the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students in obtaining a score of 70% . The teachers determined the final score and allowed the students to remediate any work that did not yield the score needed to qualify as acceptable content for the portfolio.

During the implementation of the practicum, the eighth-grade teachers were encouraged to use each strategy at least once in the classroom. The modifications the teachers found necessary for each strategy were explained

and the benefits shared with the other eighth-grade teachers in evaluation sessions held each four weeks of the implementation period.

A two day session was held during the summer to orient volunteer peer students from the eighth-grade of their roles in assisting the eighth-grade at-risk students. These peers, selected by their seventh-grade teachers, were elected by the following criterion : (1) the eighth-grade students were advised of the peer services they were expected to perform and then volunteers were recruited, (2) the students were advised at the time of recruiting of the two days selected in the summer that the orientation would be held, (3) a parental permission form was completed by the volunteers' parents in order for them to participate in the summer session and assist the eighth-grade at-risk students during the school year (appendix A), (4) the peer mentors had to attend the orientation to serve, and (5) the peer mentors were monitored by the eighth-grade teachers at intervals of four weeks to ensure that the volunteer service being performed was not too strenuous on the mentors. During the school year, the peer mentors attended sessions after school to evaluate their roles in assisting the eighth-grade at-risk students and were offered advice to encourage fellow mentors.

After the school year began, middle school personnel attended one orientation session after school to discuss their roles in assisting the eighth-grade at-risk students. The guidance counselor, media specialist, principal, custodians, and lunch-room workers were asked to encourage the eighth-grade at-risk students whenever possible.

The community resources contacted by the writer, were asked to volunteer their efforts in assisting the eighth-grade at-risk students to succeed. Volunteer tutoring and encouragement were the main efforts sought from the

community resources. A list of the eighth-grade at-risk students along with phone numbers and addresses was divided and distributed to the community members to encourage contact. An orientation was held after school by the writer to communicate the part community resources were capable of performing to aid the eighth-grade at-risk students. The writer remained in contact with the community resources during the implementation of the practicum to answer questions and offer advice.

The middle school student exhibits a strong developmental need for socialization. Peer influence is at its strongest between the ages of 11 and 17. Opportunities for positive peer influence should be generated at the middle school level. Educators and community members can be a part of positive influence on middle school at-risk students in addition to their peers. The opportunities were available in the implementation of the practicum. Participation in the practicum was one vehicle to socialization. The socialization needs of the eighth-grade at-risk students are better met when they have conversations with peers, school personnel, and community members centering around education. The important aspects of education, where the at-risk students work with their peer mentors, and where adolescent talk is respected by the adults who are there to help them succeed and socialize into our society, are a preface to building and maintaining a positive self-concept. Social validation is important for all young adolescents, but especially so for the at-risk students who desperately need academic and social assistance to experience success. This success is vital if the at-risk students of today are to make positive contributions to society in the future.

Report of Action Taken

After the writer began the solution with the eighth-grade at-risk students,

peer teachers were sensitized to the problem. Each teacher agreed to assist in the solution. These teachers and the writer selected the the eighth-grade students to serve as educational mentors to their at-risk peers. The administration was aware of the problem and plans for implementation of the instructional strategies for the eighth-grade at-risk students. The administration supported the endeavor. The following is the calendar plan the writer used to implement the instructional strategies.

Month 1

Week 1:

The eighth-grade teachers received the study strategies designed to complete the remainder of the school term. The strategies were presented in a text format and each eighth-grade teacher received a copy. The writer asked the eighth-grade teachers to read the text when convenient during the week.

Week 2:

The writer met with the eighth-grade teachers during the planning period they shared. The writer and the eight grade teachers discussed the strategies and made plans to implement their use immediately.

Week 3:

The writer met with the eighth-grade teachers to offer any assistance needed in the implementation of the strategies during a planning period.

Week 4:

The eighth-grade teachers met with the writer during this week to evaluate the progress with the strategies and made any modifications needed.

Month 2

Week 1:

The writer met with the eighth-grade teachers after school to discuss the benefits of any modifications made. The eighth-grade teachers explained their modifications and reported on the benefits for the at-risk students.

Week 2:

This was the final week of the school term. The writer held oral interviews with the eighth-grade teachers to evaluate the study strategies used and the benefits for the eighth-grade teachers and the eighth-grade at-risk students. The writer also made a video interview of the eighth-grade at-risk students to assess if they felt the study strategies were of help to them. The writer also asked the eighth-grade at-risk students if they intended to use these strategies in high school. If so, why and if not, why not?

Week 3:

This week was used by the writer to evaluate the anticipated success of the study strategies. The writer charted the success by showing an increase or decrease in evaluations.

Week 4:

The writer presented the outcome of the evaluations to the administrator in a report format. The comments of the at-risk students were offered on video along with the eighth-grade teachers' comments.

Month 3

Week 1:

The writer used this week to prepare in detail for the workshops. The study strategies were prepared in a

report form.

Week 2:

The writer continued to prepare the study strategies in a report form

Week 3:

This week the writer presented a full explanation of the practicum to the administration. Even though prior permission to implement the practicum had been approved, the writer wanted everyone in the school system to be aware of the details of the practicum.

Week 4:

The orientation of school personnel was held during this week of preplanning . The personnel was advised on their role in aiding the eighth-grade at-risk students in achieving success by encouraging them when possible. A workshop for the mentors took place this week. The mentors were advised of their roles in the practicum.

Month 4

Week 1:

The writer explained the portfolio use, PORPE, DR-TA, SMART, and L-R-D. Any questions were answered and the strategies were discussed in great detail by the writer and the eighth-grade teachers.

Week 2:

The KWL, REAP, PLAE, and Survey methods of instructional strategies were presented to the eighth-grade teachers.

Week 3:

A cuing system and Listening Guides were the topics of this

workshop. The eighth-grade teachers and the writer used this time to review all instructional strategies that were presented in the two previous sessions.

Week 4:

A mid-progress report was issued to the practicum advisor. The writer found the practicum to be proceeding as planned and the eighth-grade teachers, mentors, school personnel, and administration were informed and ready to aid the at-risk students.

Month 5

Week 1:

The eighth-grade teachers explained the portfolios to the eighth-grade at-risk students. The portfolios were used as a portion of their evaluation. The at-risk students were informed that their teacher and themselves would make joint selections to contribute to the portfolio

Week 2:

The SMART and L-R-D methods were used this week. These methods were designed to aid students with poor reading skills.

Week 3:

The PORPE and PLAE study strategies were presented to the at-risk eighth-grade students this week. The methods are very valuable to middle school students in need of reading remediation.

Week 4:

This week was used to introduce the community resources to the part they played in assisting the eighth-grade at-risk students to achieve success. The community resources were available to offer encouragement and guidance to the at-risk students. The writer held a brief

session with the eighth-grade teachers to evaluate the progress of the eighth-grade at-risk students, the use of the study strategies, any changes needed, and the assistance of the mentors. A discussion was held to offer any needed remedies to problems that were present.

Month 6

Week 1:

The KWL plus and DR-TA study strategies were used during this week. These strategies are designed to ensure the at-risk students will learn from their text in any content area.

Week 3:

The Survey Technique, PLAE, and SMART strategies were used during this week to aid students with mastering their textbooks.

Week 4:

This week was used to evaluate the KWL, REAP, PLAE, DR - TA, SMART, Survey Technique, and cuing system strategies. The at-risk students' progress was evaluated along with the mentors' improvement. The strategies were reviewed and any changes the eighth-grade teachers found necessary to make were discussed.

Month 7

Week 1:

The PORPE and LRD strategies were utilized in the eighth-grade teachers' classrooms. These strategies were used on a group basis with the teachers being sensitive to the individual at-risk students needs.

Week 2:

The Listening Guide served as this week's strategy. The Listening Guide will aid the at-risk students in high school

for the lecture method which is preferred by many secondary teachers.

Week 3:

The eighth-grade teachers designed a custom strategy that they feel had the greatest impact on the success of the eighth-grade at-risk students in their area of content. The eighth-grade teachers discussed why they made the strategy and why they chose the components of it.

Week 4:

The writer had a meeting during the eighth-grade teachers planning period to discuss the evaluations of the LRD, PORPE, the Listening Guide, and the strategy designed and implemented by the teachers. The progress of the eighth-grade at-risk students, the mentors, and the use of portfolios was evaluated.

Month 8

Week 1:

The use of the instructional strategies and the use of the portfolio contributions as an evaluation continued.

Week 2:

The writer encouraged the eighth-grade teachers to continue with the strategy they felt was best suited to aid the eighth-grade at-risk students in their quest for success.

Week 3:

The writer interviewed the eighth-grade teachers and the eighth-grade students. The topic of the interview was if the study strategies had been helpful in the content areas. The results of the interviews were evaluated and recorded by the writer.

Week 4:

The writer evaluated the data from the implementation of the practicum. A report was issued to the administration of the progress made by the practicum.

The following are examples of the objectives the writer used.

Week 1: The eighth-grade teachers received the study strategies to be used during the final weeks of school.

Week 2: Plans for the immediate implementation of the strategies were finalized.

Week 3: The writer aided the eighth-grade teachers with the strategies.

Week 4: The writer and the eighth-grade teachers evaluated the strategies.

Week 5: Modifications made to the strategies were discussed by the writer and the eighth-grade teachers.

Week 6: Interviews with the eighth-grade teachers and eighth-grade at-risk students were made to evaluate the study strategies.

Week 7: The writer charted the success of the strategies.

Week 8: The writer presented the outcomes of the evaluation to the administration.

Week 9: The writer prepared for the workshops.

Week 10: The writer continued to prepare for the workshops.

Week 11: The administration was given a full explanation of the practicum.

Week 12: The orientations for school personnel and the peer mentors took place.

Week 13: The DR-TA, PORPE, SMART,L-R-D and portfolios were presented during this week in a daily session.

Week 14: The KWL, REAP, PLAE,and Survey strategies were shared in the one day workshop.

Week 15: Listening Guides and a cuing system were the topics of the workshop planned for one day.

Week 16: A mid-progress report was issued to the practicum advisor.

Week 17: The portfolios were explained to the at-risk eighth-grade students by the eighth-grade teachers.

Week 18: The SMART and L-R-D strategies were the main attraction this week. All eighth-grade teachers implemented the use of this strategy during this week in their content area.

Week 19: The PORPE and PLAE study strategies were used this week by the eighth-grade teachers to aid their at-risk students in academic success.

Week 20: This week was used to introduce the community resources to their role in the implementation of this practicum. An evaluation session was held to monitor progress.

Week 21: The KWL plus and DR-TA study methods were used by the eighth-grade teachers.

Week 22: The REAP technique was implemented during this week.

Week 23: The Survey Technique, PLAE, and SMART,study strategies were used during the week.

Week 24: This week the KWL plus,DR-TA, PLAE, SMART, REAP, and Survey Technique were evaluated. Also evaluated were the at-risk students, the mentors, and the study strategies used to date.

Week 25: The PORPE and LRD strategies were implemented in the content areas by each of the eighth-grade teachers.

Week 26: The Listening Guide was used this week by the eighth-grade teachers.

Week 27: Each eighth-grade teacher designed and implemented a custom strategy designed for use in their area of content.

Week 28: The writer held an evaluation of the PORPE, the LRD, Listening Guide, and the custom strategy each eighth-grade teacher implemented in their area of content. The progress of the at-risk students, the mentors, and the portfolio contributions were also evaluated.

Week 29: The use of portfolios and instructional strategies continued.

Week 30: The writer encouraged the continued use of the strategy the

eighth-grade teachers found most effective in their content areas.
Week 31: The writer interviewed the eighth-grade teachers and at-risk students to evaluate the use of the instructional strategies.
Week 32: The writer evaluated the data from the implementation of the practicum. A report was issued to the administration.

Permission to implement this practicum was obtained from the administration. All supplies, facilities, and materials needed for this practicum were readily available. No unusual items were required for the implementation. The writer remained in the eighth-grade throughout the practicum.

The only deviations from the original plan in this practicum were the influx of new students and the removal by moving of three of the eighth-grade at-risk students.

Consultation was made with the guidance counselor as new students entered the school. The eighth-grade teachers had the peer mentors introduce the new students to the instructional strategies being used in the classroom. Any problems or misconceptions pertaining to the instructional strategies were cleared by the eighth-grade teachers. After the new students were oriented with the instructional strategies, no problems were noted in their ability to mesh with the instruction taking place in the class.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The writer taught 55 eighth-graders that were labeled as academically at-risk due to several factors. An inability to read on grade level, existing textbooks written on an elevated readability level, low socioeconomic conditions, and eighth-grade teachers not skilled in adapting the existing textbooks for at-risk students' success were the major causes of the problem. The writer taught the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students reading and history. The 55 eighth-grade at-risk students were grouped together to allow a slower pace of the academic instruction. With this slower pace of instruction, 37 of the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students were achieving an acceptable grade of 70 in all of the content areas. There were 18 students that were experiencing an academic failure in one or more areas of content. These failures resulted in much frustration for the 18 at-risk students, their teachers, and the writer. The problem the writer faced was structuring a plan that would assist the 18 eighth-grade at-risk students in successfully reading their textbooks through support strategies. After much research, the writer was able to format and introduce instructional strategies designed to ensure academic success for the eighth-grade at-risk students. The use of multi-faceted program involving peers, faculty, parents, and counselors was one phase of the solution. Motivational activities combined with support from parents, community, peers, and all concerned teachers were also

beneficial in resolving the dilemma. The implementation and evaluation of the instructional strategies took place over an eight month period.

Results

After the implementation of this practicum, the writer had the following results. For objective one, at the end of eight months, 50 of the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students achieved an acceptable grade of 70 in all content areas. The result of objective two was that at the end of eight months, 50 of the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students achieved a minimum of 70 out of 100 points on teacher-made evaluations used as tools to evaluate the at-risk students' progress in a content area. The third objective revolved around an oral interview of the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students by the writer regarding attitudes toward reading the existing textbooks. Fifty of the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students indicated, in response to their ability to successfully read the existing textbooks even with the teachers' help and guidance, that they were able to achieve success. The final objective involved the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students rating the key vocabulary concepts as unknown, familiar, or known. An oral survey was administered at the end of the practicum that indicated that 20% of the vocabulary concepts were unknown by the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students.

To measure objective one, the writer recorded the grades in all content areas. The grades were transcribed weekly and any modifications that were needed to ensure the at-risk students' success were suggested to the teachers by the writer. The eighth-grade teachers and the writer met weekly to compare and contrast the at-risk students' scores and communicate any vital information that would provide solutions for the academic challenge facing the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students.

The second objective was measured by using modified teacher-made

evaluations. The assessment instruments were teacher-made in order to ensure that the evaluations contained objectives or goals stressed by the teachers. An assortment of teacher-made evaluations were used to acquaint the eighth-grade at-risk students with assessment instruments they will encounter later in their educational careers. The teacher-made evaluations were administered to the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students weekly on a designated day in each content area in order to provide structure and decrease any confusion concerning evaluations. The teacher-made evaluations were valuable in assisting the eighth-grade at-risk students in obtaining an acceptable score of 70% in all content areas.

To measure objective three, the writer conducted oral interviews of the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students at the beginning and end of the practicum. The oral interviews were used to obtain responses from the at-risk students concerning attitudes toward the existing textbooks. The concluding interview of the fifty eighth-grade at-risk students indicated that they were able to achieve success with the teachers' help and guidance. For these students, much of their prior sentiment toward the existing textbooks was therefore considered not as intense.

The fourth objective was measured with an oral survey of the 55 eighth-grade students. The oral survey was administered during the summation of the practicum revealing that merely 20% of the vocabulary concepts were rated as unknown. This was an impressive gain in mastering the vocabulary concepts and provided the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students with a powerful instrument for future academic application.

The writer was pleased that all of the objectives and the expectations that accompanied them were achieved.

Discussion

Being labeled as the poorest county in the State did little to assist the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students who fought simply to survive. The socioeconomic conditions of the area was not conducive to making academic achievement a priority. The at-risk student is unique in that they do not qualify for a learning disability class, yet few of them are academically successful in the regular class. There were many students who were left to struggle, experience academic failure, leave the educational arena, never to return. Thomas (1991) alluded to the fact that many at-risk students make choices daily that alter their lives forever with no knowledge of the ramifications. The writer talked with many of the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students about the endless array of educational opportunities available to them in the present and in the future. These at-risk students failed to see the connection between education and self-sufficiency. The apathy toward education was displayed to them on a daily basis at home by members of their families that were caught in the web of poverty. Many of the eighth-grade at-risk female students were contemplating pregnancy as a means of escaping the classroom where they felt shackled to an impossible task of mastering academic obstacles. The females were quick to acknowledge that they would be entitled to government funds to support themselves and their child. An alarming number of mothers were encouraging the adolescent females to become pregnant in order to contribute to the pool of economic resources in the home. A large number of male at-risk students were contemplating their sixteenth birthdays in order to legally quit school. They were not concerned with the lack of skills they possessed in order to enter the job market. These eighth-grade at-risk males were aware of the drugs that invaded their homes and the generation of crime that resulted, yet they

knew that they were assured instantaneous employment in this realm. The writer arranged for many conferences with social resources outside of the school environment to reveal the future complications that would occur unless an education was obtained. The counseling conferences appeared to alter the choices for a number of these students. Many of the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students were able to comprehend the goals of the writer in attempting to enable them in successfully mastering the objectives of the content areas, obtain academically acceptable scores, and acquire supporting strategies that would serve them for the remainder of their academic careers. The results of the supporting strategies used in the content areas for the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students suggested to the writer that these same tactics can be used with any textbook at any level. The educational system needs to recognizes that at-risk students require a unique curriculum, including teachers trained in presenting supporting strategies. The implications indicate that the at-risk students are able to succeed in any content area if the teacher will evaluate the material, present supporting strategies, provide a weekly schedule of evaluation expectations, and prepare the evaluation based on the objectives presented.

The writer turned to the literature in search of solutions to assist the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students. Kallman (1991) suggested the use of a multi-faceted program involving peers, faculty, parents, and counselors. Rosenshine (1990) states that teachers make daily decisions about the methods used to present academic materials. These decisions are usually made with the majority of the students' academic needs in mind. The at-risk students should be given the skills and strategies to read successfully by their teachers (Tierney, Readence, & Dishner, 1990). Many educators continue to resist using

strategies that could enable at-risk students to develop literacy in the content areas. The problems the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students were experiencing in not successfully reading their textbooks even with teachers' help and guidance were not unique to any situation. The writer gathered a series of support strategies and presented them to the eighth-grade content area teachers. The writer used these strategies and combined suggestions of many of the authors to find a solution to the 18 eighth-grade at-risk students that were failing in one or more content areas. The combination of training the eighth-grade teachers in using the support strategies, the involvement of peers, faculty, parents, and social resources, produced the results the writer had hoped. Fifty of the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students were able to produce an acceptable score of 70 out of 100 possible points on teacher-made evaluations. The oral interviews indicated that 50 of 55 eighth-grade at-risk students were able to successfully read the textbooks even with the teachers' help and guidance and only 20% of the key vocabulary concepts were unknown. These results indicated to the writer that the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students had a healthier outlook towards education.

The writer's leadership skills improved greatly during the preparation and implementation of this practicum. The writer learned that powerful communication is an attribute of all leaders. The only way that powerful communication can be endorsed is through obtaining knowledge. Knowledge is power and it takes knowledge to improve any situation. Faculty members that were aware of the practicum often approached the writer for advice on students facing an academic challenge that appeared hopeless. The writer has learned that planning and prioritizing is essential in order to assist the at-risk students with academic success. Knowledge in the form of research was the key to

leading the content area teachers in devising a plan to assist the at-risk students in achieving success. Confidence was obtained, pondered, and then shared through the acquisition of knowledge. A knowledgeable teacher with leadership skills is what every student deserves to have influence them on the road to academic success.

Recommendations

The support strategies the writer used will be a significant aid in the future. Many educators are often as frustrated as the students that are not succeeding in the content areas. The textbooks are not written on a readability level that can be mastered by the at-risk students reading on a lower level. The writer believes that the following recommendations would help other educators assist the at-risk students in making the transition from failing to succeeding.

1. Educational training facilities should strive to assist teachers in mastering the skills needed to assist the students who are not reading on grade level. Educators should realize that as long as the objectives the State mandates are taught, they are free to develop their own methods of presentation and evaluation.

2. Support strategies should be incorporated by the content area teachers in order to assure academic success takes place. These strategies should therefore incorporate any means to ensure that the at-risk students succeed.

3. Extensive planning and prioritizing is essential if the teachers are to become successful in their resolve to assist the at-risk students. No support strategy should be viewed as inflexible. Modifications should be made to accomadate the particular needs of any individual or group of at-risk students.

4. The writer will continue to incorporate the support study strategies in the classroom and encourage other teachers to use them also. Educational research will be ongoing in an attempt to find solutions to the problems that the at-risk students face daily.

Dissemination

The writer informed the administration and faculty of the support strategies that were to be used for assisting the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students. They were informed of the progress the 55 eighth-grade at-risk students made with the support strategies. The eighth-grade colleagues of the writer have used the support strategies in their various content areas and have adapted the strategies they feel are best suited for their particular needs. The fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh grade teachers were introduced to the support strategies in a workshop, given copies of the material, and have reported using them with success. The writer plans to approach the superintendent with presenting the support strategies to the high school staff in the form of a workshop and distribution of materials. Colleagues teaching in other areas of the State with a similar problem were contacted by electronic mail. They were provided with a summary of the study strategies and were mailed copies of the materials. Educators in other parts of the United States were also contacted by electronic mail about the success that the instructional strategies offered.

Reference List

Allington, R. (1994). The schools we have. The schools we need. The Reading Teacher, 48, 14-29.

Aukerman, R. (1972). Reading in the secondary school classroom. New York: McGraw-Hill, 47-62.

Beachman, M. (1990, December). Participation from all students. The Executive Educator, 12, 16-25.

Brown, D. (1994). Instructional strategies for at-risk history students. (Practicum Paper), Nova Southeastern University, Ed.D. Practicum.

Bruckerhoff, C. (1988). Removing the stigma of disadvantage : A report on the education and employability of 9 to 15 year-old youths "at-risk". (Report No. 88-90. Washington, DC: National Commission for Employment Policy (DOL).

Burmeister, L. (1988). Reading strategies for secondary teachers. Massachusetts : Addison Wesley.

Carr, E. & Ogle, D. (1987). KWL-plus: A strategy for comprehension and summarization. Journal of Reading,30, 626-631.

Castallo, R. (1976). Listening guide-A first step toward notetaking and listening skills. Journal of Reading, 19, 289-290.

Cunningham, P. (1991). Multimethod, multilevel literacy instruction. Language Arts, 68, 578-584.

Dana, C. (1989). Strategy families for disabled readers. Journal of Reading, 33, 30-35.

Eanet, M. & Manzo, A. (1976). REAP-A strategy for improving reading/writing study skills. Journal of Reading, 19, 647-652.

Gall, R., Gall, P., Jacobsen, F., & Bullock, A. (1990). Tools for learning : A guide to teaching study skills. Alexandria, VA : Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Grady, E. (1991). The portfolio approach to assessment. Phi Delta Kappan, 84, 7-30.

Gutherie, G. & Gutherie, L. (1991). Streamlining interagency collaboration for youth at-risk. Educational Leadership, 17-22.

Hadley, W. & Hadley, R. (1991). Motivational strategies for at-risk students. Educational, III, 573-576.

Hall, M. & Henderson T. (1990). Research on motivation. San Diego: Academic Press.

Hodgkinson, H. (1989, June). All one system : Demographics of education. Paper presented at the meeting for the Institute for Educational Leadership, Washington, DC.

Hodgkinson, H. (1991). Reform versus reality. Phi Delta Kappan, 78, 9-16.

Kallman, D. (1991). Development and implementation of an at-risk program to aid targeted middle school students with self-esteem and academic performance problems. (Practicum Paper 043), Nova Southeastern University, Ed.D. Practicum.

Knapp, M., Turnbull, B., & Shields, P. (1990). New directions for educating the children of poverty. Educational Leadership. 4-8.

Larrivee, B. & Bourque, M. (1991). The impact of several intervention strategies on at-risk students. Education, 112, 48-64.

Manzo, A. & Casale, U. (1985). Listen-read-discuss: A content heuristic. Journal of Reading, 28, 732-734.

May, F. (1994). Reading as communication. (pp. 56-57). New Jersey : Macmillan Publishing.

McKenna, M. (1993). Content literacy : a definition and implications. Journal of Reading, 34, 184-186.

McKenna, M. & Robinson, R. (1993). Teaching through text. New York : Longman Publishing.

Olson, J. & Platt, J. (1992). Teaching children and adolescents with special needs. New York : Macmillan Publishing Company.

O'Neil, J. (1991, April). A generation adrift. Educational Leadership. 4-10.

Ornstein, A. & Hunkins, F. (1993). Curriculum foundations, principles, and issues. New York: Allyn and Bacon.

Paris, S. (1992). Models and metaphors of learning strategies. (pp. 299-321). San Diego : Academic Press.

Perna, E. (1992). Dealing with at-risk middle school students. NASP Bulletin, 106-108.

Ravitz, D. (1992). A culture in common. Educational Leadership, 49, 8-11.

Richardson, V., Casanova, U., Placier, P., & Guilfoyle, K. (1989). School children at-risk. New York : Falmer Press.

Rosenshine, B. (1990). Scaffolds for teaching content-specific skills. Educational Leadership, 64. 60-69.

Schwartz, R., & Raphael, T., (1985). Concept of definition : A key to improving students' vocabulary. The Reading Teacher. 39. (pp. 198-205).

Sherman, A. (1992). Falling by the wayside : Children in rural America. Washington DC : Children's Defense Fund.

Simpson, M. (1986). PORPE : A written strategy for studying and learning in the content areas. Journal of Reading, 29. 407-414.

Simpson, M. & Nist, S. (1984). PLAE: A model for planning successful independent learning. Journal of Reading, 29. 218-223.

Stauffer, R. (1969). Directing reading maturity as a cognitive process. New York: Harper & Row.

Thomas, T. (1991). Examining the context of strategy instruction. Remedial and Special Education, 12, 44-53.

Tierney, R., Readence, J., & Dishner, E. (1990). Reading strategies and practices. Boston : Allyn and Bacon.

Vaughan, J. & Estes, T. (1986). Reading and reasoning beyond the primary grades. Boston, MA : Allyn & Bacon.

Walter, K. (1991). Chance to succeed : A report on a project at P.S. 61. New York : Board of Education.

Waynant, T. (1993). An effective program for urban at-risk children. Educational Horizons, 83, 136-144.

Werner, P., & Smith, F. (1992). Classroom research on reading empowers teachers. The Missouri Reader, 15. 8-14.

APPENDIX A

PARENTAL PERMISSION FOR MENTOR STUDENTS

Mentor Permission Form

The following student has been recommended by his/her teachers to assist other eighth-graders who need help with their school work. They were selected due to their leadership and academic abilities. This is a great honor to be chosen to help others. Please sign below stating you agree to mentoring sessions that will take place during school and if agreed on, after school. All after school mentoring sessions will be monitored by an eighth-grade teacher. Thank you.

_____Teacher

_____Student

_____Parent

_____Administration